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F R O M   A N X I E T Y   T O   I N S I G H T

The Process of Formulating a  
Methodology in Practice

A thesis presented in partial  
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree  
of Master of Philosophy at  
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I dedicate this piece of work to the Spirit that guides and determines what is to become available to Human Beings.

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## A B S T R A C T

Anthropologists do not have a Methodology that acknowledges their subjective experience during fieldwork, as scientific data. Yet an accurate presentation of Anthropology as a science, depends on inclusion of the person(ality) of the Anthropologist. This anomaly is both, the doorway to the creative element that defines Anthropology as a unique discipline in the Humanities, and the stumbling block of science in the twentieth century.

George Devereux, a French Anthropologist and psychotherapist, initially explored the dimensions of this problem in the 1930's. His dual career enabled him to envisage a model, in which the anthropologist's integral part in the fieldwork was acknowledged. Although he recorded the development of this model during fieldwork around 1935, it remained unpublished till 1967, and is still largely unknown in the Humanities. The potential value has yet to be explored in the fieldwork situation.

The primary aim of this thesis, is to record the experiential process of formulating a Methodology in the practice of fieldwork, using the key concept Devereux proposed: "the subjectivity inherent in all observation is the road to an authentic, rather than fictitious objectivity". (1967).

Within the Scientific tradition, Methodology has been regarded as a prescription for doing fieldwork, rather than a distinctive tool for creating this unique basis of Anthropology. The challenge has been to identify the double bind this causes, between theory and practice, and to present a new approach to Methodology, that offers a practical way of being an Anthropologist. The person whose presence, in the final result, is critical if Anthropology is to reflect what it proposes to explore - the essence of humanity in a scientific manner.

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## PREFACE

### FINDING THE FIRE

There is a space where one is  
both inside and outside;  
Where one is gathering wood,  
lighting a fire and  
warmed by it ... ..  
embers burst to the touch.  
Before we sleep  
we surround the edge of the night.  
The last food  
comes from cool embers  
Our feet push a well  
into the ashes.  
We eat together.

Early morning mist is cold.  
There is a slow awakening of hands to flames  
and bones to warmth.  
I blow on the coals.  
It is in this instant,  
The action captures the entire process;  
the action is not less than the entire experience;  
the action becomes equal to the knowing.  
It is this knowledge that is Anthropology.



## INTRODUCTION

The issue of being a Scientist and voicing oneself as a human being is central to the future of Anthropology as a discipline. Fieldworkers are concerned with the problem of how to present the totality of human experience as scientific data, so that both the subjective, personal experience and the process of objective research is evident. Few who have explored this question feel comfortable with their results. Some write as though they were forced to put themselves on the outer edge of the discipline in order to find some balance.

Ultimately the question is, as Scientists, how do we integrate ourselves into the research output? How can we present ourselves as effectively in charge of research, the process of science?

The surface issue is that the Anthropologist, who has served time doing fieldwork, is present in the final analysis, only by exclusion. A small but increasing number of anthropologists feel sufficiently challenged to ask, is this what we want in the discipline of Anthropology? They would rather include their subjective or personal experiences in the final fieldwork report.

The deeper issue centres on a Methodology which powerfully conditions practice.

The dilemma occurs initially when the Anthropology student, who has learnt a textbook definition of scientific method, has to reconcile this with what actually happens during fieldwork practice. Later, the process record of fieldwork is edited; Personal experiences and key insights, that developed the fieldworkers understanding, are removed to produce a record of fieldwork, that fits the model of the research process. The result is a double bind between theory and practice; the textbook methodology defines and controls fieldwork practice without being responsive to the process of fieldwork and the needs of the fieldworker.

Anthropologists are searching for a way out of the

double bind. There is a need for an alternative to methodology as it is currently defined; at the very least, a pragmatic approach to methodology, that recognises personal experience as a precursor to human knowledge.

The primary aim of the thesis is, to record the experiential process of formulating a Methodology in the practice of fieldwork.

The key concept is taken from the Anthropologist, George Devereux's thesis, "Anxiety to Method in the Behavioural Sciences" (1967):

- "all data is subjective, the subjectivity inherent in all observation is the road to an authentic objectivity". (Introduction: 1967).

The format of the thesis is holistic, in that the focus of the research is on process, rather than outcome; on patterns, rather than cause and effect; the thesis as a whole, must be read as a process record.

To this end, I regard myself as a Scientist using a particular method, in much the same way as a crafts-person would use a tool. I regard becoming a Scientist-Anthropologist and doing Research - Anthropology, as a learning process.

Beginners always have some idea about what it is they want to explore and I was no exception. The difference is that;

- (a) I created a working model for fieldwork before I arrived at my actual fieldwork area in Papua New Guinea;
- (b) I foresaw the model as satisfying immediate orientation needs but envisaged modifications as I adapted to the process of fieldwork. Recording this process would be the basic task of the methodology and as such would evolve over time.

I discovered that formulating a Methodology in practice, is both a practical way of doing Anthropology and a safe and satisfying way of being an Anthropologist; the person whose presence in the final result is critical, if Anthropology is to reflect what it proposes to explore, the essence of humanity in a scientific manner.

## CHAPTER OUTLINES

### CHAPTER ONE

- PART I Anthropologists as Individuals have challenged the professional situation that leads people to study people without being human themselves [Le Barre: 1967].
- PART II Anthropologists, as Individuals and as Editors, have challenged the standard criteria for scientific research by recording their experience of distress, frustration, and revelation within the text of their field results. Some specifically identify the theoretical difficulty of reconciling Methodology with practice.
- PART III To date Anthropologists do not have a Methodology that acknowledges either the subjective personal experience of the fieldworker or the unique process of fieldwork as scientific data. A change is being demanded.
- PART IV Introduces Anthropologists George Devereux and William F. Whyte, who have identified many of the dimensions of the problem of creating appropriate Methodology for practice.

### THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

### OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

### PURPOSE OF THE THESIS

### CHAPTER TWO METHODOLOGY

Recording the process of formulating a Methodology for fieldwork.

### CHAPTER THREE THE FIELDWORK LOCATION AND PEOPLE

The Lujure people, Nomadic Hunters and Gatherers, who are located around the Yellow River in the South Wapei district of Papua New Guinea.

## CHAPTER FOUR     RESULTS:     6 CASE STUDIES

1.     Settling a Problem
2.     Kumul Meri
3.     Warikori Land - Lightning Meri
4.     Drumbeat
5.     Scrubbing Saksak with Dalini
6.     Conversations with Apke

The data for Cases 1 - 4 is shown in a series of stages:

- (a)   Excerpts from Raw Diary Notes in the Field, and Letters.
- (b)   A Vignette of an event - diary notes rewritten in New Zealand.
- (c)   Notes on the pattern of anxiety to insight.
- (d)   Notes on the context of the situation.

## CHAPTER FIVE     ANALYSIS

PART I     The Methodology in Use.

PART II     The Methodology as it evolved during fieldwork.

PART III    The Nature of Process

## CHAPTER SIX     DISCUSSION

Formulating a Methodology is the Natural Process of Fieldwork.

## CHAPTER SEVEN   CONCLUSION